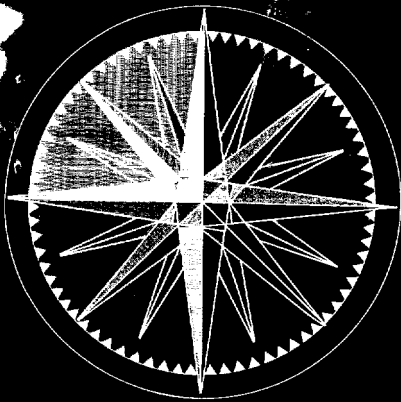


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Release 2006/10/10 : CIA-RDP79-00927A004100090002-8



9 August 1963

OCI No. 0292/63A
Copy No.

SPECIAL REPORT

SOVIET PRESSURE ON IRAQ

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

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SOVIET PRESSURE ON IRAQ

Moscow has been intensifying its propaganda and diplomatic pressure on Iraq since the Baath Party seized power on 8 February. This campaign has been designed to counter the new government's strongly anti-Communist policies and its efforts to achieve a more truly nonaligned foreign policy than had existed under Qasim. Moreover, Moscow has recognized that the Baath, with an ideology of its own and an extensive organization throughout the Middle East, poses a long-term threat to Soviet interests in this area. Since severance of relations with Iraq or outright termination of aid would be harmful to Soviet prestige in Asia and Africa, Moscow will probably work through propaganda and covert means for the overthrow of the Baathist regime.

Initial Reaction

The Communists in Iraq began to call for the overthrow of the Baathist government on the very day it seized power, undoubtedly anticipating the campaign against them that would follow once the Baath consolidated its position. As the extent of the repression of the Communist Party became apparent, bloc clandestine radios began to call on the Kurds to cooperate in ousting the Baath. These broadcasts were quickly followed by indirect and then official attacks by Soviet organs. Moscow sought, however, to convey the impression that these attacks were on the party level and had nothing to do with state relations.

This Soviet campaign continued for approximately six weeks, and was marked by two central committee statements and a demonstration before the

Iraqi Embassy. The Baghdad government was charged with "savage crimes," "bloody terror," and "fascist pogroms."

Moscow's attacks on the Iraqi Government during this period in part reflected its appreciation of the need to demonstrate leadership within the world Communist movement. This need was particularly strong at a time when an apparently unconnected series of attacks on Communist parties elsewhere in the world coincided with an open Chinese challenge to Soviet leadership.

In the months prior to the 8 February coup, Moscow had protested repressive measures taken against the Communist parties of India, Algeria, and Tunisia. Since it has been traditionally cold-blooded regarding the fate of local Communists when state interests made protests inexpedient,

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Moscow probably calculated that these protests would cause no more than a momentary disruption in relations with these countries. In the case of Iraq, the intensity of the repression evoked a far stronger response.

A major theme in the campaign against Iraq in February and March was that of Western, particularly CIA, involvement in the coup. This is a familiar Soviet charge, yet the prominence given it over an extended period of time suggests that Moscow may in fact have believed that the West was instrumental in bringing to a sudden end a period of considerable Soviet influence in Iraq. Although Moscow probably quickly resigned itself to occupying a somewhat reduced position in Iraqi affairs, it nevertheless calculated that if sufficient propaganda pressure were exerted the Baath could be prevented from turning too sharply to the West.

At the same time that it was engaging in strenuous propaganda efforts to moderate the Baath's anti-Communism and to preserve Iraqi neutralism, the USSR was actively seeking to preserve as much of its economic-military presence as possible. It was largely through aid to the Qasim regime from 1958 to 1962 that Moscow had been able to establish its highly favorable position in Iraq. Soviet

leaders almost certainly calculated that the preservation of all or most of these programs would enable them to ride out the early days of Baathist rule until such time as the new government came to realize its dependence on Soviet good will.

Shortly after the initial wave of mass arrests and executions of Iraqi Communists had spent its force, the volume and intensity of Soviet attacks on the new regime began to diminish. Sporadic attacks continued on Baath policy toward domestic Communists and increasingly open support was given to Kurdish claims to autonomy within Iraq, but these commentaries contained little of the vitriol of earlier attacks.

During this period Moscow repeatedly sought the resumption of economic projects suspended by the Iraqi regime, proposed new aid agreements, continued its military shipments, and indicated that it would probably accede to an Iraqi request to terminate the surface-to-air missile project in the Baghdad area.

The Kurdish Campaign

Iraq's renewal in early June of its campaign against the Kurds brought the resumption, in even more violent terms, of Soviet attacks. A 15 June TASS statement charged the Iraqi

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Government with "Hitlerite" treachery, the use of "fascist SS detachments," and genocide, and asserted that Baghdad's Kurdish policy is a violation of the UN charter and a matter of concern to all nations. The genocide charge was repeated in a 20 June Pravda "Observer" article, which also reiterated that the USSR was supporting only Kurdish autonomy within the Iraqi state, a position which protects Moscow from charges of fostering separatism within an Arab state.

The Pravda article also threatened the suspension of Soviet aid to Iraq. Thus far this threat appears to have been only partially implemented. Since the end of May no military shipments have arrived in Basra, and a ship bound for that port and carrying a military cargo including six MIG-21 jet fighters returned to the Black Sea. However, while military aid shipments have been suspended, the only reductions in Soviet economic aid programs have been at Iraqi initiative.

Moving its campaign into the diplomatic realm, the Soviet Union has had the issue of genocide proposed for UN discussion. On 1 July Mongolia requested that this issue be placed on the agenda of the 18th UN General Assembly, and on 4 July the USSR sought to have the UN Economic and Social Council discuss

charges of Iraqi genocide. Subsequently, the Soviet UN delegate indicated that the USSR might request a special session of the UN Security Council to discuss this problem.

In order to add substance to its charges that the Kurdish issue is not merely an internal Iraqi affair, but an international problem, Moscow on 9 July delivered a statement to Iraq charging CENTO and Syrian involvement in the suppression of the Kurds. This allegation was detailed in identical statements to Turkey, Iran, and Syria, which claimed that these countries were helping Iraq in its operations against the Kurds.

Moscow has apparently never been able to establish control of the Kurdish national movement and in any case would find it extremely difficult logistically to render the Kurds meaningful aid. The renewal of fighting in the north of Iraq may well have coincided with a Soviet decision that there was little or no hope of re-establishing good relations with Iraq, and thus the Kurdish cause was taken up as a means of attacking the Baathist regime.

Regard for Arab Reaction

It would appear that Moscow has been proceeding cautiously

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thus far in its anti-Baath campaign, slowly increasing the pressure, but at the same time carefully gauging Iraqi and Arab reaction before proceeding further. The diplomatic campaign has been conducted through Mongolia as an intermediary and has only suggested further action without committing the Soviet Union to a specific course. The negative Arab reaction to the introduction of the Kurdish issue in the UN suggests that Moscow may seek some other means of attack.

The Soviet campaign against Iraq has been almost entirely a result of the policies of the Baath in that country. Moscow, however, has said or done little regarding Syria, where the Baath has taken a more moderate course and where the Soviet commitment has not been very great. Moscow continues to seek cooperation with Nasir, extending new economic credits and assisting in the Yemen operation; yet at the same time the USSR has maintained its distaste for Arab union under Nasir.

Iraq under Qasim had been a valuable Soviet asset in that it was often an Arab spokesman

for Soviet causes. Moscow had gained this asset through its aid program and through the political power of the Communist Party of Iraq. Since 8 February Moscow has seen that party badly crippled and has seen that a changed political order has largely negated the political benefits gained through the aid program. Having, for all practical purposes, lost two of its most reliable means of maintaining influence within Iraq, Moscow turned to the traditional diplomatic weapons of veiled threats and hectoring of a small power to influence the Baath to respect Soviet interests. When the Baath did not prove susceptible, Moscow appears to have calculated that Soviet interests could be served only by a change in government in Baghdad.

There is strong evidence to suggest bloc involvement in the 3 July uprising at Camp Rashid, and it is likely that the USSR will work both through propaganda media and covertly to bring about the overthrow of the Baath in Iraq, calculating that any successor regime would be more favorable to Communist interests. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM)

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